

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address:	1322 9th Street NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Blagden Alley/Naylor Court Historic District Shaw Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
		<input type="checkbox"/> Permit
Meeting Date:	March 30, 2023	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	#23-221	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The applicant, Kalida Development Group LLC, owner of 1322 9th Street NW, seeks conceptual design review to build a new four-story plus partial fifth-story penthouse in the Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic District and Shaw Historic District. Plans were prepared by Architextual.

Property Description and Context

Blagden Alley and Naylor Court Historic District was designated in 1990 as a significant example of 19th century working class housing and for its association with the early 20th century social reform movement. The relationship between large formal rowhouses on streets and small spartan dwellings on the alleys is a hallmark of this historic district. The alleys of the district also feature workshops, stables, garages and a few large commercial buildings.

The lot has long been nearly vacant but offers a glimpse of Blagden Alley's unique character among historic districts for the notability of the architectural and social history of its alley buildings and community. At the rear of the lot is a mid-19th century stable that was the subject of Board review which resulted in restoration of the stable rather than demolition.¹ The building to the south was originally built as an early 19th century rural villa and its side gable roof form is still visible; when it was converted to commercial use a front addition brought the building to the street. To the north is a pair of rowhouses which are typical of this block of two- and three-story buildings on 9th Street. The blocks consists of brick houses with brick projection bays and cast iron stairs, and commercial buildings with frame and glass storefront projections usually combined with long bands of transom windows. To the north of the site at the alley is one of the last surviving alley houses of the historic district.

Project Summary

The applicant proposes construction of a four-story, dumbbell-shaped building at the front of the lot leaving space at the rear so that it will not be built over the stable. The front façade is rendered with a vertically cladded wall and arranged with four columns of asymmetrically-shaped projecting bays and balconies, made of metal and glass, which alternate across the width of the façade. The ground floor hosts a wide projecting storefront combined with areaways and the main entrance to the building. The rear and side elevations repeat the vertical cladding of the

¹ HPA #13-091 and HPA 13-322, January and June 2013

front facade. The partial fifth floor is set back on all four sides and would have metal railings near the roof edges to enclose small private decks.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The general size and height of the proposed building is compatible for its context but the front façade requires revision in order to be compatible with its 9th Street context.

The Board has used a well-established set of design principles to evaluate the compatibility of new buildings in historic districts.² On a basic level, the setback and orientation of the building to 9th Street and a massing organized with projecting bays, are relatively easy achievements for this site. Similarly, a four-story tall building—accepting that the setback fifth story recedes from view substantially—is consistent with the Board’s standard that new construction is compatible when it is not more than one-story taller than the range of heights established by the historic buildings of the block.

The concept falls short on more complicated principles. The historic buildings of the block establish a rhythm of small-scaled building components like projecting bays and punched windows. Bays are generally half the width of the façade and are spaced to allow room for windows in between bays. The proposed façade clusters its bays and balconies so tightly together that there is no room for windows in between bays. The façade is nearly all projection and not a proportional balance of projection and wall. The overall effect is not only out of rhythm with its neighbors, but by using very large windows and glass railings at the balconies, the building components are disproportionate to the new building and neighbors. The unusual shape of the bays and their seemingly random arrangement adds to the discord. A front façade of vertical cladding and metal paneling is unlike the surrounding brick buildings which only use metal in limited amounts as bands of ornamental trim within storefronts and cornices.

The proposed rear elevation is much simpler by comparison and combined with the setback from the alley poses no compatibility issues. The existing stable remains relatively untouched and the vertical cladding is not out of place in the context of the alleyway where forms and materials are typically more utilitarian.

Archaeology

The site embodies a microcosm of post-Civil War District demographics with evidence of social, racial, architectural, occupation, class, and economic differences. Maps and surveyor records show alley dwellings, a blacksmith shop, stable, single-family house with indoor plumbing, and multifamily house with a privy in the yard, meaning these lots offer the opportunity to explore a rich material culture of these residents and workers. Development here will destroy this archaeological potential and permanently remove the opportunity to study a cross section of the households that lived in the period just after the Civil War. The Historic Preservation Office recommends a systematic subsurface survey be performed to identify intact deposits for

² *New Construction in Historic Districts* (1997) sets out the following principles: setback, orientation, scale, proportion, rhythm, massing, height, materials, color, roof shape, ornamentation, and landscape.

sampling and excavation³. The project would be ideal for public interpretation before, during and after, and possibly for public participation in the field and laboratory to process and catalog the artifacts. The survey would be conducted in accordance with District standards and guidelines for archaeology and the property owner would be encouraged to donate the resulting archaeological collection to the District for curation and interpretation.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for a five-story plus penthouse new building at 1322 9th Street NW to be compatible in height and massing with the character of the historic district, but to advise the applicant to revise the concept and return for further review.

Staff contacts: Brendan Meyer and Ruth Troccoli

³ There are several scenarios for completing such project: by a consulting firm hired by the developer (as with the Moxy Hotel project); or funds could be provided to a third party to hire a consultant to oversee the project and complete a technical report.